

APPENDIX A

Results of Scoping

Introduction

The Planning Area encompasses approximately 214,000 acres of public lands located in extreme southeastern California, near the Arizona and U.S.–Mexico border in Imperial County, bounded to the west by the Old Coachella Canal, to the east by the UPRR, to the north by Mammoth Wash, and to the south by I-8 and the U.S.–Mexico border.

The primary activities in the Planning Area include OHV recreation and camping. The Imperial Sand Dunes consist of a typical sand dune habitat with the larger dunes found in the central portion of the Planning Area. Microphyll woodlands can be found on the eastern edge of the sand dunes and comprise several species, including paloverde, mesquite, and ironwood.

Scoping process

A. Notice of Intent

The BLM published a Notice of Intent to Prepare a Resource Management Plan for the Imperial Sand Dune Recreation Area, California and an associated Environmental Impact Statement in the *Federal Register* on March 18, 2008. The NOI states:

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis and planning process. The scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7) for this analysis will include identification of issues and viable alternatives as well as identification and notification of interested groups, individuals and agencies to determine level of participation and obtain additional information concerning issues to be addressed in the RAMP/EIS.

B. Public Scoping Meetings

On April 4, 2008, the BLM published a news release announcing three public scoping meetings for the RAMP planning effort. The dates and locations of each meeting are listed below: Tuesday, April 22, 2008 at the Handlery Hotel in San Diego, California; Wednesday, April 23, 2008 at the Mountain Preserve Reception and Conference Center in Phoenix, Arizona; and Thursday, April 24, 2008 at the Imperial Irrigation District William R. Condit Meeting Room in El Centro, California.

Approximately 30 members of the public, mainly OHV users, discussed the future management of the ISD SRMA at the scoping meetings in San Diego and El Centro, California, and Phoenix, Arizona.

The BLM did not make formal presentations at the public meetings; attendees were free to explore displays and address questions to the subject matter experts present. BLM representation at each scoping meeting included: Vicki Wood, Field Manager; Thomas Zale, Associate Field Manager; Erin Dreyfuss, NEPA Coordinator; Michael Boxx, Law Enforcement Chief; Neil Hamada, Outdoor Recreation Planner; and Marisa Williams, Outdoor Recreation Planner for Vending. Stephen Razo of CDD also attended the meeting in Phoenix and Sandra McGinnis, CASO NEPA Coordinator, attended the meeting in San Diego. During the meetings, attendees were encouraged to take extra information packages and comment forms and distribute them to interested individuals that were not able to attend the meetings.

Issue Summary

A. Summary of Public Comments, Issues, and Concerns

BLM did not receive scoping comments from any agencies. Letters were received from the following clubs and organizations:

- American Sand Association
- Center For Biological Diversity
- EcoLogic
- R and R Duners Club
- SandEaters
- San Diego Off-Road Coalition
- United Desert Gateway

The following issues and concerns represent the key themes and priorities that emerged during the public scoping process. These key issues and priorities will be considered for analysis in the RAMP/EIS in addition to preliminary issues identified by BLM personnel, cooperating agencies, and user groups.

Key issues:

- Identification of areas that are open and closed to OHV recreation
- Re-evaluation of the need for an Adaptive Management Area
- Re-evaluation of the need for administrative closures to protect biological resources
- Management of the commercial vending program
- Management of the fee program
- Identification of allowable uses within each area of the Planning Area
- Identification of how BLM intends to carry out resource protection (e.g., microphyll woodlands, invertebrates, plants, cultural resources)

Concerns:

- Facilities management
- Law enforcement/public health and safety
- Border issues
- Interpretive program management
- Possibility of concessions as a management tool
- The question of visitor capacity
- Solid waste/hazardous materials management

B. Issues Raised that will not be Addressed

Certain issues raised during scoping will not be addressed in the Imperial Sand Dunes RAMP/EIS because they are either outside the scope of this planning process or are outside the authority of BLM.

Establishing new OHV Recreation Areas Outside of the ISD SRMA

Many clubs and organizations requested that BLM consider establishing new areas for OHV recreation on other lands in the El Centro Field Office. While the BLM will consider making more areas available for OHV recreation within the Planning Area, the scope of the RAMP/EIS will be limited to BLM-administered lands in the approximate 214,000-acre Planning Area based on the following rationale:

The purpose and need for the RAMP/EIS is mostly based on the designation of new critical habitat for PMV and the management of the ISD SRMA as it relates to this new designation. BLM acknowledges that there are concerns about the loss of public lands available for OHV use, but the RAMP/EIS will analyze a range of alternatives, including allowing OHV use to continue in the Planning Area at the same levels prior to the ROD for the 2003 RAMP.

Pursuant to NEPA, 40 CFR 1506.1(c) states:

While work on a required program environmental impact statement is in progress and the action is not covered by an existing program statement, agencies shall not undertake in the interim any major Federal action covered by the program which may significantly affect the quality of the human environment unless such action:

- (1) Is justified independently of the program;
- (2) Is itself accompanied by an adequate environmental impact statement; and
- (3) Will not prejudice the ultimate decision on the program. Interim action prejudices the ultimate decision on the program when it tends to determine subsequent development or limit alternatives].

In light of these considerations, BLM has determined that it is appropriate to maintain the scope of the current RAMP/EIS within the approximately 214,000-acre Planning Area. Furthermore, any proposal developed on BLM lands outside of the Planning Area for this purpose would need to be accompanied by an adequate EIS, and the existing BLM resources and personnel allocated to the RAMP/EIS are dedicated to addressing the purpose and need outlined in Chapter 1 of the Scoping Report.